

12 March 1955

Summary of Discussion on Soviet Agriculture at the National Security
Council Meeting 10 March 1955

25X1A9a Following the remarks of the Director of Central Intelligence on Soviet agriculture, the President asked whether the new land which was being brought under grain cultivation was flat and consequently suitable for mechanization. [REDACTED] replied that the new land was only partially suitable for mechanization as some of it varied from rolling steppe to hilly. The best lands in the area in which expansion was taking place were already under cultivation. The expansion was taking place onto land that was marginal both from the standpoint of terrain, soil and rainfall. The Soviet agricultural planners were consequently making a big gamble and the chances of succeeding were less than even. The new lands area suffered from drought on an average of two years out of five. Since the past year had been a good one, the chances were more than even that the area would have an insufficient rainfall during the coming crop season.

Secretary Wilson pointed out that in the United States tractors had displaced horses on the farms with the result that there was more farm land available for growing food for humans. One horse was equivalent to four people in the amount of land needed to feed him. As the Soviet farms became more mechanized, some of that land would be available for feeding people.

The President remarked that in the attempt to double its meat quota in the next five years, the USSR would be "breeding instead of eating" with all the effort going into increasing cow herds. This would impose a further unpopular belt tightening on the Russian people. In this attempt to increase quickly their herds, the Soviets would have to resort to the use of poorer quality breeding stock. In any event, this marginal land could only support a poorer grade of cattle.

Secretary Wilson noted that the Soviets could increase their meat availability more quickly with hogs than with cattle. The President pointed out that their emphasis on hog production was evident from the 700%-planned increase in corn production. They were apparently aiming at the mid-West's corn-hog ratio. In response to a question regarding the region where the corn expansion was taking place, [REDACTED] said that the only region suited to corn production was the Ukrainian-

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Black Sea area. The southern part of the Ukraine, however, was subject to drought. The best corn area was a narrow belt north of the Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas. This was good corn country because it was warm and had a plentiful rainfall because of the nearby mountains and water. As the Soviets expanded their corn acreage north from the Ukraine and North Caucasus region, the corn crop would become progressively poorer until it would not mature grain.

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Replying to a question on Soviet use of American hybrid seeds, [REDACTED] said that the Soviets attempted to use American seeds, but, with the exception of a few favored areas, seemed to have the best luck with their native varieties.

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The President questioned [REDACTED] about the Soviet areas where other cereal crops were grown. [REDACTED] replied that spring wheat and oats could be grown in the new agricultural lands, winter wheat and barley in the Ukraine, and rye and oats in the north. Leningrad was an oats-rye area.

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The President commented on the large percentage of cereals in the Russian diet as compared to that of the United States. He asked about the composition of the French diet. [REDACTED] said that the French diet has a high cereal content similar to the Russian, but contains more quality foods. [REDACTED] answered Secretary Wilson's question about the British diet by saying that British meat consumption was low and included dependence on cereals and fats for calories. The Japanese diet was poor in quality with a large reliance on rice and fish.

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The Director of Central Intelligence said that he would furnish the Council with a chart showing the caloric composition of various national diets. He also informed the Council that he planned to give a briefing on Communist China's agriculture.

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